

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method of processing active wireless device  
2 statistics, the method comprising:  
3 receiving statistics on the number of  
4 active wireless devices in at least one  
5 communications cell;  
6 estimating the number of people in a geographic region of  
7 interest from the received statistics on the number of  
8 active wireless devices.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving statistics  
2 includes:  
3 receiving information from a plurality of different  
4 communications cells, said information including at a  
5 first count corresponding to the number of active devices  
6 in a first communications cell and a second count  
7 corresponding to the number of active devices in a second  
8 communications cell.

1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein estimating the number  
2 of people in a geographic region of interest includes:  
3 correlating the first and second counts  
4 corresponding to the first and second communications  
5 cells, respectively, to the geographic area of interest  
6 to generate a set of target area statistics including an  
7 estimate of the number of active wireless devices in the  
8 geographic area of interest.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein estimating the number  
2 of people in a geographic region of interest includes:  
3 performing an extrapolation operation on the  
4 estimate of the number of active wireless devices in the  
5 geographic area of interest to produce the estimate of  
6 the number of people in the geographic area of interest.

1 5. The method of claim 4, further comprising:  
2 generating a report including the estimate of  
3 the number of people in the geographic area of interest;  
4 and  
5 outputting said report.

1 6. The method of claim 4, further comprising:  
2 predicting the distribution of the estimated  
3 number of people in a geographic region of interest from  
4 the received statistics on the number of active wireless  
5 devices.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein active device counts  
2 from different wireless communications cells each at  
3 least partially overlapping said geographic area of  
4 interest are used in predicting the distribution of the  
5 estimated number of people.

1 8. The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
2 generating a report including the estimate of  
3 the number of people in the geographic area of interest

4 and information on the predicted distribution of the  
5 estimated number of people.

1 9. The method of claim 2, wherein the first count is a  
2 count of a first type of wireless device and said second  
3 count is a count of a second type of wireless device  
4 which is different from said first type.

1 10. The method of claim 9, wherein the first type of  
2 wireless device is a cell phone and the second type of  
3 wireless device is a personal data assistant.

1 11. The method of claim 9, further comprising:  
2 predicting characteristics of the people in the  
3 geographic region of interest from the type and number of  
4 active wireless devices in the geographic region of  
5 interest.

1 12. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step  
2 of:

3 generating a report including the estimate of  
4 the number of people in the geographic area of interest  
5 and information on the predicted characteristics of the  
6 people.

1 13. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of  
2 receiving statistics on the number of active wireless  
3 devices includes:

4 receiving active wireless device statistics  
5 corresponding to different points in time; and  
6 generating, from received active wireless  
7 device statistics corresponding to at least two different  
8 points in time, information on the flow of traffic in the  
9 geographic region of interest.

1 14. A method of generating a traffic flow report, the  
2 method comprising the steps of:

3 collecting active wireless device statistics  
4 from a communications cell over a period of time; and  
5 detecting changes in the collected active  
6 wireless device statistics; and  
7 generating a report including traffic flow information  
8 based on detected changes in the collected active  
9 wireless device statistics.

1 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the detected changes  
2 include at least one of an increase and a decrease in the  
3 number of active wireless devices in a communications  
4 cell.

1 16. The method of claim 14, wherein the detected changes  
2 include changes in the identity of the active wireless  
3 devices being serviced by the cell.

1 17. An apparatus for estimating the number of people in  
2 a geographic region, the apparatus comprising:

3           an interface for receiving an active wireless  
4 device count from at least one communications cell;

5           means for estimating based on the received  
6 active wireless device count the number of people in a  
7 geographic region including at least a portion of said  
8 communication cell.

1       18. The apparatus of claim 17,

2           wherein said interface receives wireless device  
3 count information including a first count corresponding  
4 to a first communications cell and a second count from a  
5 second communication cell; and

6           wherein means for estimating includes:  
7 means for correlating the first and second counts  
8 corresponding to the first and second communications  
9 cells, respectively, to a geographic area of interest to  
10 generate a set of target area statistics including an  
11 estimate of the number of active wireless devices in the  
12 geographic area of interest.

1       19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein said means for  
2 estimating further includes:

3       means for performing an extrapolation operation on the  
4 estimate of the number of active wireless devices in the  
5 geographic area of interest to produce the estimate of  
6 the number of people in the geographic area of interest.

1       20. A wireless communications system, the system  
2 comprising:

3           a plurality of wireless communications centers,  
4       each wireless communications center collecting statistics  
5       on the number of active wireless devices being serviced  
6       at a point in time;

7           a processing center coupled to the plurality of  
8       wireless communications centers, the processing center  
9       receiving from said wireless communication centers the  
10      statistics on the number of active wireless devices being  
11      serviced, the processing center including:

12           means for estimating the number of people in a  
13      geographic region of interest from the received  
14      statistics on the number of active wireless devices being  
15      serviced by said wireless communications centers.